



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

[Docket No. FWS–R4–ES–2021–0017; FXES11140400000-212-FF04EF4000]

### Receipt of Incidental Take Permit Application and Proposed Habitat Conservation Plan for the Sand Skink, Orange County, FL; Categorical Exclusion

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability; request for comment and information.

**SUMMARY:** We, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce receipt of an application from WP South Acquisitions, LLC (Wood Partners) (applicant) for an incidental take permit (ITP) under the Endangered Species Act. The applicant requests the ITP to take the federally listed sand skink incidental to construction in Orange County, Florida. We request public comment on the application, which includes the applicant's proposed habitat conservation plan (HCP), and the Service's preliminary determination that this HCP qualifies as "low-effect," categorically excluded, under the National Environmental Policy Act. To make this determination, we used our environmental action statement and low-effect screening form, both of which are also available for public review.

**DATES:** We must receive your written comments on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*].

**ADDRESSES: *Obtaining Documents:*** You may obtain copies of the documents online in Docket No. FWS–R4–ES–2021–0017 at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

***Submitting Comments:*** If you wish to submit comments on any of the documents, you may do so in writing by any of the following methods:

- *Online:* <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments on Docket No. FWS–R4–ES–2021–0017.

- *U.S. mail:* Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. FWS–R4–ES–2021–0017; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: PRB/3W, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041–3803.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Erin M. Gawera, by telephone at 904–731–3121 or via email at [erin\\_gawera@fws.gov](mailto:erin_gawera@fws.gov). Individuals who are hearing or speech impaired may call the Federal Relay Service at 1–800–877–8339 for TTY assistance.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** We, the Fish and Wildlife Service, announce receipt of an application from Wood Partners for an incidental take permit (ITP) under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). The applicant requests the ITP to take the federally listed sand skink (*Neoseps reynoldsi*) incidental to the construction of a housing development (project) in Orange County, Florida. We request public comment on the application, which includes the applicant’s proposed habitat conservation plan (HCP), and the Service’s preliminary determination that this HCP qualifies as “low-effect,” categorically excluded, under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. 4231 *et seq.*). To make this determination, we used our environmental action statement and low-effect screening form, which are also available for public review.

### **Project**

The applicant requests a 5-year ITP to take sand skinks by converting approximately 2.72 acres (ac) of occupied sand skink foraging and sheltering habitat incidental to the construction of a housing development located on a 21.6-ac parcel in Sections 31 and 32, Township 23 South, Range 27 East, on Parcel ID number 32-23-27-0000-00-007 in Orange County, Florida. The applicant proposes to mitigate for take of the sand skinks by purchasing 5.44 credits from the Lake Wales Ridge Conservation Bank or another Service-approved conservation bank. The Service would require the

applicant to make this purchase prior to engaging in activities associated with the project.

### **Public Availability of Comments**

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made available to the public. While you may request that we withhold your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

### **Our Preliminary Determination**

The Service has made a preliminary determination that the applicant's project, including land clearing, infrastructure building, landscaping, and the proposed mitigation measure, would individually and cumulatively have a minor or negligible effect on sand skinks and the environment. Therefore, we have preliminarily concluded that the ITP for this project would qualify for categorical exclusion and that the HCP is low effect under our NEPA regulations at 43 CFR 45.4405 and 45.4410. A low-effect HCP is one that would result in (1) minor or negligible effects on federally listed, proposed, and candidate species and their habitats; (2) minor or negligible effects on other environmental values or resources; and (3) impacts that, when considered together with the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable similarly situated projects, would not result in significant cumulative effects to environmental values or resources over time.

### **Next Steps**

The Service will evaluate the application and the comments received to determine whether to issue the requested permit. We will also conduct an intra-Service consultation pursuant to section 7 of the ESA to evaluate the effects of the proposed take. After considering the preceding findings, we will determine whether the permit issuance criteria of section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA have been met. If met, the Service will issue ITP number PER0002676 to WP South Acquisitions, LLC.

**Authority**

The Service provides this notice under section 10(c) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 17.32) and NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations (40 CFR 1506.6 and 43 CFR 46.305).

**Jay Herrington,**

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